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7/1/85 (2)
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Afghanistan Situation Report

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16 April 1985

79-81 INC/CB

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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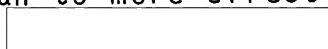
CHANGES IN REGIME FORCES IN WESTERN AFGHANISTAN



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The Afghan regime is planning to form an operational group of ground forces in western Afghanistan to more effectively counter resistance efforts.



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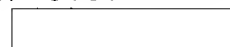
BABRAK REGIME PLANS ELECTIONS



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The Kabul media report that Afghanistan's Revolutionary Council has called for elections for a national assembly within a year.



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IN BRIEF

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PERSPECTIVE

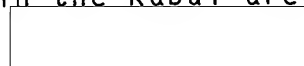
AFGHANISTAN IN MARCH



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The insurgents demonstrated a high level of proficiency in operations against the Soviets, but Soviet and Afghan forces continued to press the insurgents in the Kabul area and in the eastern provinces.



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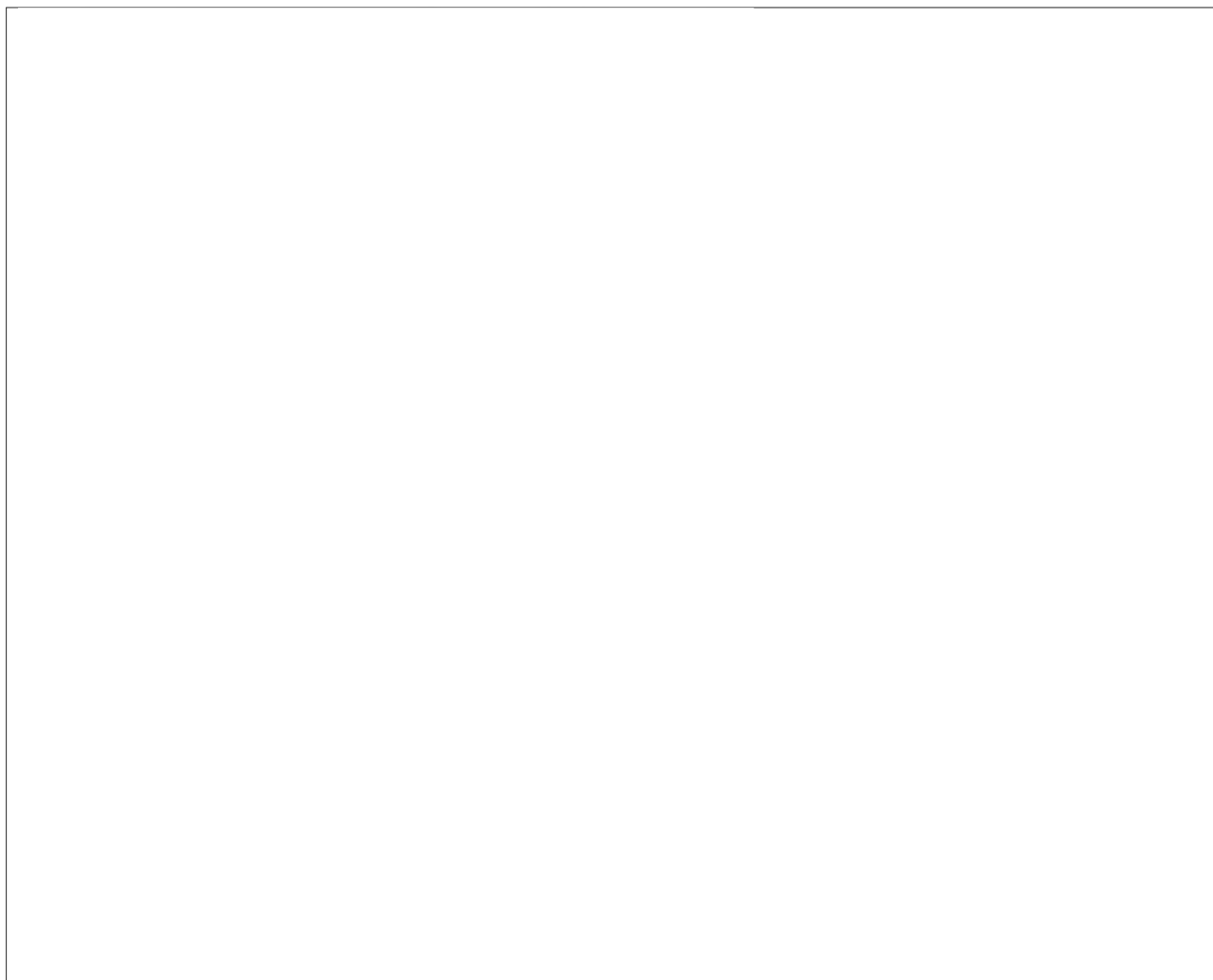
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CHANGES IN REGIME FORCES IN WESTERN AFGHANISTAN



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The regime may have formed a new 4th Corps in western Afghanistan to which the group will be subordinate.

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Comment: The formation of an Afghan operational group--though it is likely to be understrength and of limited effectiveness--is another indication of preparations for major operations against insurgents in the west. Soviet and Afghan activity in western



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Afghanistan has already increased in recent months. If a 4th Corps is formed, it probably would include the Afghan 17th Infantry and 4th Armored Divisions in the Herat area and the 21st Mechanized Brigade in Farah Province. [REDACTED]

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BABRAK REGIME PLANS ELECTIONS [REDACTED]

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Afghanistan's Revolutionary Council has decreed that a national assembly be held before 21 March 1986, according to Kabul media. The assembly is to consist of the PDPA Central Committee members, the Council of Ministers, selected members of the National Fatherland Front and social organizations, and elected representatives. No date for the election of representatives has been set. [REDACTED]

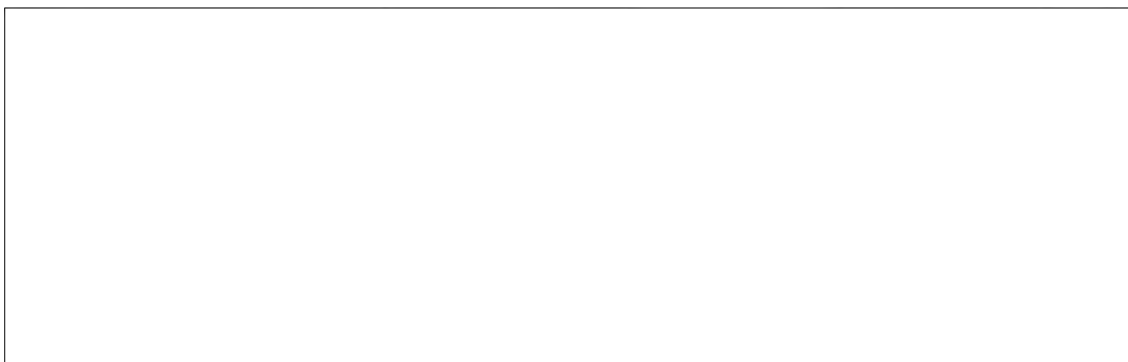
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Comment: Even if elections are held in the coming year, the regime is likely to take steps to assure a favorable outcome. Moreover, most members of the national assembly will be regime officials, judging from the decree. The decree and attendant publicity probably were given impetus by recent press reports that the Peshawar-based Afghan resistance groups are near agreement on unifying and choosing a spokesman. The Babrak regime had promised elections in 1984 but did not follow through, probably because of the lack of regime control outside Kabul. [REDACTED]

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IN BRIEF

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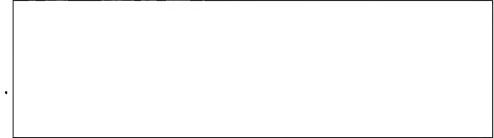


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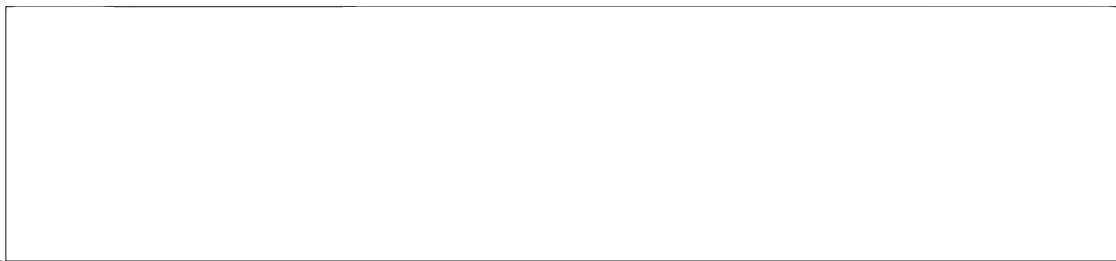
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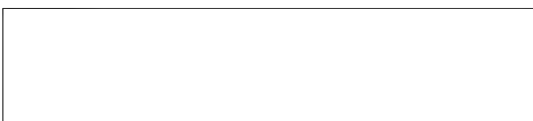
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-- According to the US Embassy in Islamabad, the Peshawar-based resistance organizations have run into difficulties in their effort to reach accord because fundamentalist leader Sayyaf has balked.

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PERSPECTIVE**AFGHANISTAN IN MARCH**

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The insurgents demonstrated a high level of proficiency in operations against the Soviets, but Soviet and Afghan forces continued to press the insurgents in the Kabul area and in the eastern provinces. On the diplomatic front, senior Pakistani officials said they expect Gorbachev to pursue Moscow's current policy in Afghanistan but with more vigor. [REDACTED]

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Resistance Activities

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The insurgents suffered a setback, however, when the Pakistani border town of Teri Mangal was almost totally destroyed by a fire in early March. The fire broke out in a bazaar area and burned for several days, destroying 300 shops and several insurgent ammunition depots, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The extent of insurgent losses cannot be determined, and the cause of the fire is unknown; sabotage cannot be ruled out. [REDACTED]

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The Kabul Area

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Kabul continued to be generally quiet, with only a few notable exceptions. Insurgent bombs caused moderate damage and killed between five and 10 people including two Soviets at the Ministry of Agriculture, a KHAD office, a government newspaper, and in the Soviet diplomatic area. The insurgents also fired several rockets that caused little damage and casualties. Soviet authorities tightened security somewhat after Chernenko's death. [REDACTED]

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Kabul's main bazaars continued to be well stocked with food; fruit and vegetables were trucked in from Jalalabad, according to the US Embassy. Prices remained stable thanks in part to Soviet subsidies. No fuel shortages or lines were visible at the city's 11 fuel pumps. The electrical situation continued to improve, although power outages still occurred regularly. [REDACTED]

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The Afghan-Pakistani Border Area

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Afghan Army troops initiated a brief firefight with Pakistani border forces on 16 March after insurgents seized three Afghan observation posts near the Khyber Pass border crossing. A senior Pakistani Army source told the US Embassy that the incident ended after the insurgents withdrew. There were no casualties.

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More Pressure on Pakistan

Senior Pakistani officials told US Under Secretary Armacost they had concluded from the March meeting between President Zia and General Secretary Gorbachev that Gorbachev will pursue present Soviet foreign policy lines but with more vigor. They expect increased military pressure along Pakistan's western border and additional Soviet intrusions into Pakistani

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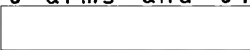
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airspace. Other Pakistani officials also expect more Soviet meddling inside Pakistan--largely through KHAD, the Afghan intelligence agency. 

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Outlook

We expect the level of fighting to increase during the spring and early summer as both insurgents and Soviets take advantage of the better weather. The Soviets will probably step up operations in the eastern provinces to block the increased flow of insurgent arms and tighten security along the Salang highway. 



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